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KAY MONROE





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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

1917

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October

Late Afternoon

A dull, grey, leaden sky.
Cold, wind-driven rain.
Dripping eaves. Rain-washed windows.
A moaning, as the wind whips thru the trees,
And with each gust, the leaves of the tired year fall,
Leaving gaunt, bare branches, that drip—drip—drip.
Scarlet maple leaves, blown across the dead grass,
Dancing the "last number";
As a woman, having fallen,
Laughs, to hide the bitterness in her heart.
The day darkens.
Lights show thru the windows of the house.
Out here it is cold,
And the wind moans as it drives the rain before it.

Morning

Dawn!

Up in the East thunders a golden sun.

Bird-songs. A cold-blue sky. Keen, crisp air.

The wind blows.

And the leaves dance frantically as against Time.

Golden leaves, scarlet leaves, deep brown leaves.

Leaves that were green in June,

When the nightingale sang in the pale blue moon-light.

Leaves that trembled in the amorous zephyrs of the South,

And bathed in warm summer showers.

Leaves thru which the great, bronze harvest moon shone

On young lovers, lingering below in the purple shadows.

Leaves that guarded the nest of the robins.

Leaves that lived

Thru the fresh Spring

And lazy Summer.

Again, Late Afternoon

Acid, pungent smoke, ascending
In thin, white spirals.
Leaves,—red, golden, brown,
Writhe in the flames that eat and burn,
Leaving only fine, pale-gray ashes.
Burning leaves,
Passing away with the Summer
To join last Spring.
A gust of wind.
The flames leap, catching the leaves the rake brings to the pyre.
Red leaves turn black, then—white ashes,
And the virile wind, out o' the North,
Picks them up and tosses them over the dead, grey grass.
To-morrow it may rain again.
There are dull, leaden clouds in the east.

The Ninth Stanza

Your lips are vague and shadowy,
And when they sink on mine
Seem, rather than a human touch,
The very aroma of rare old wine,
That brings my soul forth to inhale,
Never to find the perfume that it seeks;
And so, seeks on and on and always comes again
To meet your lips expectantly.

Adieu

Away!
Come, Time,
And let your months rush by,
So I may lose her
In the misty vistas of your yesterdays.

The Worshipper

Fainting, the weary worshipper went on
From place to place,
Where monks and priests told of their God,
Yet brought no warmth unto his starving soul.

Ministers talked to him of Christ,
Of Crucifixions, Sermons on the Mount;
Yet something more than this he craved,
And wandered on from church to church

Until at last he came unto a place,
Where, minister and congregation gone,
The church in darkness,
There alone remained the organist.

Thru holy-pictured windows,
Over dim, deserted pews,
Fell stained bars of light.
Far in the dimmest corner of the church,
Over the music score, a little beam of light
Put gold upon the hands and face
Of him who played upon the ivory keys.

Music, music rising high and clear,
Throbbing until the rafters shook,
On, on he played, and as the pilgrim,
Kneeling in the pew, listened unseen,
The sweetness of his Christ came clear.
In wondrous melodies he found the Cross.
The Spirit of the Supper came to him.
His soul was warmed.
At last he worshipped right.

The music ceased.
The burden that his soul had carried in was gone.
Purged clean, out on the streets he went,
And men, fresh from the sermons
Of the Sabbath morn,
Looked, wondering at the Light upon his face.

The Poet

What are we searching for, my weary soul?
What do we seek?
I hear thy fretful cry,
Disturbed and restless, day by day;
Yet fail to guess aright thy wants.

Sunsets and stars,
And Nature garbed in garments of thy God,
All call to thee.
Yet to what end?

About me, men are busy in the marts,
And stars are hid by factory smoke.
Sunsets mean little where the man-made lights flare up,
Supplanting with a bald, white light
The dying orb;
And thy strong cry for beauty
Is to them a puny, foolish wail.

They bid thee die,
While at their loathsome, mercenary schemes
They ask my body, soulless quite, to sweat,
So I may fill my stomach with the food
My hands must earn.

Food for the body!
None for thee.
This is their way.
Surely, if I can have thee
For mine own, at Death,
It were not such an awful thing to die.

Home

Tho small, tangled by-ways
Claim my foolish foot-steps now;
Tho I may pause at Taverns on the Road
To sip Sweet Potions men have brewed;
Still, tho we travel slowly, O my Soul,
Onward we plod
To that Great Goal from whence ye sprang.
Courage! I hear thy cry,
But my poor brain, bewildered by these worldly storms,
Feels, rather than understands
The Home it blindly travels to.

To the Woman

A sorry thing, this love of ours.
It bears no fruit,
Except a little transitory happiness.
A moment's rapture,
Now and then,
We wring
From bodies
Burning with an appetite—
The smallest thing in Love's domain;
Given to us,
A tool
To serve for a far nobler end.
Surely, 'tis sweet,
But incomplete.
Nature outraged;
The great, Grand Scheme of things upset.
Love, heralded thru centuries
As far the strongest thing,
Should do much more
Than merely bring
This unproductive happiness.
Night after night
We lie together,
Yet bring forth
Nothing but body-thrills
And nerve-exhausted sleep;
And my strong loins
Are made to play at games
The rewards of which
Are realized and gone—
All in a moment's time.
Your deep grey eyes,
Your hands,
All of your form,
Ah, I would see you once again
In that small thing
That should be ours.
Surely, this is the aim of Love.
This other way is wrong,
And some day we shall grieve for wasted youth.

To the Woman With a Past

Always the Shadow of your Past,
Throwing its ugly form
Between us—
Shading my love for you:

Sometimes a shudder
At the secrets of your lips,
Mixed with the sweetness
Of your kisses, dear.

Sometimes my bated breath—
When memories you speak aloud,
For fear of revelations
Which I would not hear.

Sometimes the sight
Of blood-red, lustful hand-prints,
Staining the white skin
I love to touch.

Sometimes a hatred
For a term you use, in tenderness—
It might have graced
Some passion of your past.

Sometimes disgust
At some love-trick;
Wondering whose lips
Taught yours the thing to do.

Sometimes a madness—
Red and white-hot heat—
When I could kill you
For the past I know not of.

These are the things
Your sex have suffered
All their lives.
I understand it now.

Derelect

Down the long avenue
Of years behind me;
Stenchful cigarette-butts strewn.
Empty glasses whose cheer I drank—and lost.
Hollow laughter
Of careless women with pickled hearts.
Wasted hours,
Full of shriveled opportunities.
“ Good fellows,”
Whom I really never knew,
But reveled with in drunken dreams.
The passing of my youth’s chaste dream of Love.
The contempt of sweet-sixteen,
And worse than that,
My contempt for it.
Ambition?
“ Give us this day—.”
You know.
It is enough.
Well, here’s “ happy days!”

Painted Lips

We met,
And I brought Love
To her;
Not of this world,
But of the dreams of youth.

The Love I bore
Surged to my lips.
Full on the mouth
I kissed her.

Pale, I withdrew,
And found my Love
Stained red
With carmine
On her painted lips.

Yosemite

Silent, majestic place,
In those fresh years
When you were young,
Did some lost race of supermen—
Bellerophon astride the winged Pegasus—
Lovingly sport with you,
Among your rocks and crags;
Leaping from spire to dome;
Plashing knee-deep in icy snow-streams, raging;
Descending swiftly in your falling waters?

A giant goddess
So you seem,
Contemptuous of the puny race
That crawls like insects
In the shadows of your majesty,
Waiting the day
When a new race will bring
A score of lovers
Fit to take the raptures
You have held all these long, lonely years.

The tall pines bellow your despair in storms
When, angered at the waste of time, you rage.
I hear your sighs for Love
In the tall trees that whisper
Of your hot desire—
Your thirst, unslaked.

Spring, 1917

America!
Best beloved of the gods,
Let thy broad lands rest sweet
Beneath the peaceful skies,
America,
The latest born of nations,
Peace be with thee,
If thy older sisters war,—
With thee be peace.
Raise thy young voice
Above the din,
America!
Keep sweet,
And sing of all the beauties
They have drowned in blood.

Oh, broad, blue bays,
Reflect not shadows
Of these battle-boats—
Mars' ocean-blood-hounds.
Sully not thy sun kissed waves
That lap against the peaceful shores.
America, sacred keep,
A sanctuary in this bloody world.

Our fields are green.
The mother-season, Spring, is here.
Life she would give.
Oh, mate her not with Mars,
America!
Or we shall reap a harvest
All of death's heads, barren bones,
And ravished lands.
Wed Peace with her,
And raise thy strong, young voice
Above the din,
And sing the marriage song
Of Peace and Spring:
America,
The best beloved!

To a California Mocking-Bird

O bird of melody,
You hold them captives—
Sunshine, flower-perfumes of the day,
The songs of all the feathered ones,
Silent thru the long spell of dark.
You catch the golden notes of morning;
Prison the silver tones of afternoon,
Put them in song,
And pour out all the glories
In the wide court of Night
And his pale queen, the Moon.

A Song of Midsummer

*All the midsummer Spirit I would sing,
So when the gardens bloom in chilly white,
When golden grain has met with reaper's scythe,
And curtains black obscure the Western sky;
When birds sing in the sunshine of the South,
And all the land is in a winding-sheet,
This song may bring the glowing warmth
Of days like these, back to our hearts again.*

Drowsy, sun-drenched gardens,
Where hollyhocks,
And mignonette,
Grow with the Jacqueminot,
Offer a perfume that shall creep
Among the bars
On which my song is writ,
And lend a fragrance to the notes
When sung in bleak, December days.

Out in the fields of grain,
A cloth of gold now gleams,
Where it has ripened
From the tender green
Of virgin Spring.
And I have borrowed
From this tawny melody,
My summer strain to grace.

Trees, that in April days
Were promising with young green leaves,
Are in their fullest bloom,
And I have taken lullabies
The South wind sings among their boughs
For sleepy birds at dusk.

All day, 'neath Helios' glare,
The bees, and all dear Nature's choristers,
Join in a mighty chanting, and thruout the night,
Frogs, tree-toads, and the crickets sing till dawn.
This is a part of summer-time, when all things live,
And these small voices sing their way into my manuscript.

Slowly, the great, bronze moon,
Scales the Eastern sky,
Lusty and warm,
Putting to shame Diana pale
Of misty April nights.
His beams flood my dark chamber
With a heavy, phosphorescent light,
And he will have his place
In deep, low tones, thruout my lay.

*All the midsummer Spirit I would sing,
So when the gardens bloom in chilly white,
And all the land is in a winding-sheet,
This song may bring the glowing warmth
Of days like these, back to our hearts again.*

For of Such Is the Kingdom

*O, we live in this age of the World,
And wax wise in the things of this Time,
And we turn from Thy Rod and Thy Staff—
We are drunk with our own man-made Wine.*

Dear Lord, those Sabbath morns
Of many a year ago, come back,
When, with our untried souls,
We gathered 'round the earnest one
Who taught of Thee.

How clear they seem, those days,
The drone of other classes
Near our own.
The opened windows, letting in
Thy sunshine; and the birds,
That broke the silence, as we prayed,
With songs that seemed a part
Of all the worship of the day.

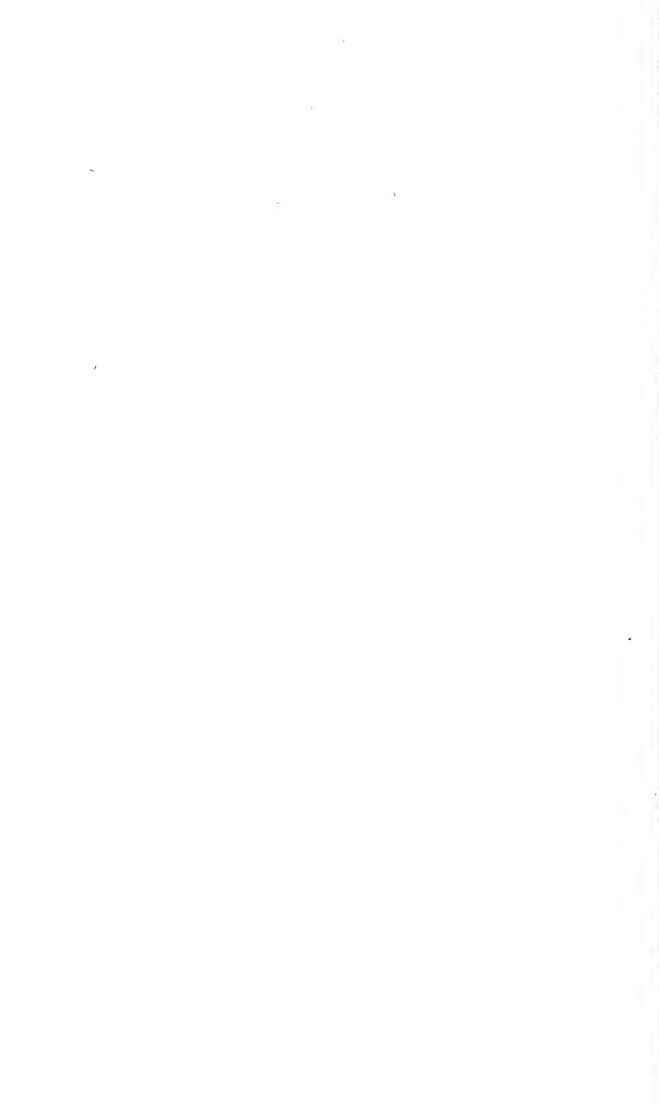
All was so simple then.
“For God so loved the world—”
No riddle, then, we read
In that old line.
There was no doubt
When, all in unison, we sang,
“He leadeth me.”

*O, we live in this age of the World,
And wax wise in the things of this Time,
And we turn from Thy Rod and Thy Staff—
We are drunk with our own man-made Wine.*

The Dragon Flies

Two steel-blue dragon flies,
In close embrace,
Flit o'er the padded lily pond;
Frightened from this green leaf
To that;
As following them,
Reflections—
Children of the Sun—
Mimic their movements,
Prompted by a teasing water sprite.

Straight toward the sun they fly—
Metallic wings aflame
In golden rays—
And then a dive
Into that cool, sweet place
Just 'tween the willow's branches, hanging low,
And their deep shadows in the pool below.
Here is the Sun barred out,
And all his kin.
The deep green shadows
Are too heavy for the sprite.
So here the dragon flies alight
And rest in close embrace.



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